



GARY HIGGINS photos/The Patriot Ledger

■ Pauline Warner, left, and Judith Lyons, center, participants in the Developing Elders Choices in Defensive Education program (DECIDE), present a pair of plants to Duxbury police Lt. Susan James for teaching the defense course. A luncheon and ceremony was held yesterday at the Duxbury Senior Center to honor those who completed the program.

SELF-DEFENSE FOR SENIORS

Duxbury police program helps keep elders safe

By KAREN GOULART
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June Puddister rears back on her right foot then lurches forward, her outstretched hand coming unsettlingly close to a reporter's nose.

"This is my space," she asserts, before breaking into a smile.

Would-be shysters and miscreants take note, a contingent of Duxbury seniors have your number.

The move was one of many things Puddister learned by taking part in the Developing Elders Choices in Defensive Education program, offered by the Duxbury Police Department.

Puddister was one of 16 people honored at a luncheon and ceremony yesterday at the Duxbury Senior Center for completing the DECIDE program.

The eight-week course taught by Lt. Susan James covered a variety of issues including how to identify and avoid scams, safeguarding a home against burglars and self-defense techniques.

Puddister said she considers herself well-informed, but learned a lot from the class.

"Really, for me, it was 'Wake up June, and be aware of your surroundings,'" she said.

Now armed with knowledge from James, and a variety of local public safety officials, they are eager to pass the information on to friends.

"I'd highly recommend the whole program, I hope they do it again because we were just a small group of seniors," Puddister said. "There are a lot more of us out there."

Graduate Florence Boyle, said she took the class to heart and recently found herself practicing self-defense moves while taking a walk the woods. She plans to spread the word about the program and hopes it will be offered in other towns.

She said the course made her a better person.

DUXBURY



■ Nantucket canine officer Keith Mansfield and "Bleck" search for hidden drugs in one of the police officers' pockets during a demonstration yesterday at the Duxbury Senior Center.

"It's just invaluable," Boyle said. "I feel empowered, now I can do this, I can be strong, I can take what comes and fight back."

James said she will teach the class again, but does not have a date scheduled.

Council on aging director Joanne Moore said there would be no problem finding interested pupils. This graduating class filled up fast.

The course taught participants how to identify and avoid scams, safeguarding a home against burglars and self-defense techniques.

"It was really amazing peeking in the (class) room . . . it was really interactive and everyone was excited to be there," Moore said. "And we had young seniors, some folks in their 50s up to one woman who is 94, there was something to benefit anyone."

The class was feted by town and state officials.

Reps. Thomas O'Brien and Daniel Webster and an aide to Sen. Robert

Hedlund, handed out certificates of achievement.

O'Brien said any step that can be taken, at any level, to keep seniors safe is important.

"But this is where the rubber meets the road, in our local communities," O'Brien said. "I hope you reach other communities and let them know what a good idea this is."

After James thanked all the guest instructors and senior center employees who helped with the program, she thanked the class.

"I'm so proud to have been your instructor," she said. "You're all officially invited to visit me at the station any time."

On behalf of the class, member Pauline Warner presented James with two plants and parting words.

"The first day we thought, what did we get ourselves into?" Warner said. "As we went along, we laughed, we were scared, we laughed a little more . . . Thank you very much, we all love you."

After the event James said the entire experience, right through the ceremony, was a positive one, "I'm just gonna miss my kids, that's all."

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